

Dallam School

Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7DD

Inspection dates

30 April 2013–1 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress and reach above-average attainment in many subjects. Following a dip in 2012 achievement has improved. Students currently in Year 11 are on track to reach well-above-average attainment in GCSE examinations. Progress has speeded up in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding, particularly in the sixth form. Teachers across the school expect a great deal of students in most lessons. Their positive and supportive relationships with students and carefully planned lessons help students to achieve well. Students appreciate the extra help teachers give to them when they need it.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students' achievement in a wide range of subjects at A level and AS level is good and improving year on year. Achievement in the International Baccalaureate is outstanding.
- Students are very keen to learn and have high aspirations. They apply themselves to tasks with great commitment. In lessons they cooperate and communicate with each other exceptionally well. Behaviour is often exemplary and students are kept safe.
- The headteacher, leaders and governors are ambitious for the school. They are bold, innovative and successful in bringing about improvements to teaching and achievement. They have succeeded in creating a school where students achieve well academically and develop into sensitive, mature and responsible young people.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough of the teaching in the main school is outstanding. Teachers' marking of written work is not always effective in helping students to improve their work.
- Leaders do not analyse how well different groups of students are performing precisely enough to gain a full picture of what improvements are needed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 part-lessons, three of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors analysed students' work in their books and listened to some students read.
- Discussions were held with staff, students and governors.
- Documents looked at included the self-evaluation document, improvement plans, information on pupils' progress, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 82 responses to Parent View (the Ofsted on-line survey). Two email messages were received from parents and the lead inspector held a conversation with a parent who requested it. The views of staff were taken into account through the 57 staff questionnaires received.

Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jim Bennets	Additional Inspector
Peter McKay	Additional Inspector
Anne Smedley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Dallam School converted to become an academy school from August 2011. The school is managed by the governing body and is part of a charitable trust. There is no managing chain or federation. When its predecessor, also known as Dallam School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- Boarding provision for up to 128 students is provided at the Heversham site, one mile from the main school site. This was inspected in March 2012. A report is available on the Ofsted website.
- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds. A small minority are from minority ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. Many of these students are from overseas and board at the school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. A well-below-average proportion of students is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs.
- A well-below-average proportion of students are eligible for pupil premium funding. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.)
- Alternative courses are provided for a small number of students at Kendal College.
- The school is an International Language College and specialises in modern foreign languages.
- It is an Adventure Learning School, which is a philosophy based on learning and teaching through adventure.
- The school offers the International Baccalaureate in the sixth form.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The school has a community college that provides educational opportunities for the community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good and outstanding teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 so that students make even more rapid progress across all subjects by:
 - ensuring marking of students' written work is more frequent and helpful in informing students of how well they have succeeded in relation to the purpose of the tasks set for homework or in class
 - ensuring that students make improvements to their work in response to teachers' guidance
 - consistently planning tasks that capture and keep students interested so that the pace of learning is maintained through a lesson.
- Analyse information on students' progress, attendance and behaviour more precisely so that leaders fully understand how different groups of students are performing at different points throughout the year in order to better inform planning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress from their individual starting points in Year 7 and achieve well in a wide range of subjects at GCSE. The proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been consistently above average.
- Progress in Key Stage 4 has not been consistently strong for all subjects, including mathematics and modern foreign languages. However, achievement has improved in response to better teaching and support for pupils identified as underachieving. Current Year 11 students are on track to exceed national averages for attainment and progress in both English and mathematics.
- Students' achievement in modern foreign languages is improving, and significantly so for the group of students that have been taught subjects across the curriculum through the medium of a modern foreign language.
- Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. Students do particularly well in the International Baccalaureate and compare very favourably with other state schools. Students make good progress from their starting points and achieve well in A level and AS courses. Almost all students move on to higher education and some are successful in gaining places at Oxford or Cambridge.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make progress in line with other students. Boys are achieving similarly to girls, having caught up on previous weaker performance.
- The small numbers of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals usually make good progress, although this was not the case for a minority of these pupils in 2012 because of poor attendance. In the current Year 11 this small group of students are achieving similarly in English to those who are not eligible. In mathematics they are only a little further behind other pupils. The school's attention to the progress of every individual student reflects its strong commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Students are securely competent in their reading, writing, communication and numeracy skills. Weaker readers are well supported and the habit of reading is encouraged across the school. Students use numeracy skills confidently when they are required in different subjects.
- The school's policy for early entry to some examinations does not hold students back from gaining their full potential, including in mathematics.
- The small number of students following courses off the school site achieve well. All students at age 16 move on to the sixth form, further education, training or employment.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching helps students to achieve well in most subjects. In the sixth form teaching is outstanding.
- Relationships between staff and students are strong and constructive so that students mostly feel encouraged and very well supported.
- Teachers usually get the best out of students, giving them a good variety of tasks that stretch and challenge them and capture their interest. Students work well together in pairs and groups and often actively seek information for themselves, discuss ideas and reflect on their own and each other's performance. Consequently, students learn at a good rate and develop good communication skills.
- In the very best lessons teachers inspire students and encourage them to use their imagination. In a Year 7 English lesson students worked with terrific enthusiasm from a basis of secure independent research as they took on the role of William Shakespeare in a London Street and promoted his plays to each other. The teacher watched carefully and intervened to challenge and develop their thinking.

- Teachers have secure knowledge of subjects. They give clear explanations and question students effectively to check progress and deepen their understanding. In mathematics teachers make sure that students understand key concepts that underpin the operations they use.
- Literacy skills are taught well across subjects with good-quality writing expected, particularly in humanities.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are very well supported. Teaching assistants provide useful support where it is needed and, subtly, enable students to develop their independence as learners.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully. They take students' different capabilities and what they have already learned into account, so that most students make good progress.
- Students know what they are trying to achieve in each lesson and teachers keep a close eye on how well students are making progress. They give helpful feedback and support in lessons.
- Marking of students' written work is, however, far more variable in quality and effectiveness. At its best, for example in art and English, teachers give clear feedback on how well students have achieved the purpose of the task. Guidance on how to make improvements is clearly stated and in sufficient detail to be helpful to students. There is an unmistakable expectation that students will act on the guidance and make improvements.
- However, in too many subjects students' work is not marked frequently enough. Comments are often superficial and do not give students any pointers as to how well they have achieved in relation to the purpose of the task, nor do they give enough guidance on how to improve. Sometimes praise is overused and it is not clear how it has been deserved. There is seldom an expectation that students will act upon any guidance that is given.
- Occasionally teaching requires improvement because the pace of learning is too slow or activities do not capture students' interest enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Most students have high aspirations for their future. In almost all lessons students are totally committed to the tasks in hand. They concentrate well, are industrious and keen to do well. They work exceptionally well in pairs and groups, sharing ideas and using their initiative.
- Sixth-form students bring considerable maturity to their learning. They are highly skilled in managing their own learning, planning what to research and sharing ideas with each other.
- Students' behaviour is often exemplary in lessons and around the school. The school is calm and orderly. Students are polite and well-mannered and courteous to visitors. They are proud of their school. The number of students excluded from school is low and has dropped in recent years.
- The rewards system is much appreciated by students and parents, especially the post cards home that recognise good work.
- Students report that bullying is very rare. They know about the many different types of bullying, including homophobic bullying. Students know what to do should it occur and are confident that adults in the school are there to help and will tackle and resolve any difficulties very quickly.
- Students feel safe and secure in school and have a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using modern technology.
- Staff manage students' behaviour very well and set high expectations based on positive and supportive relationships. Case studies show how the school has successfully included students who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour.
- Students' attendance is broadly average and improving.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governors are highly committed to helping young people to reach their full potential through learning, challenge and adventure. They have successfully established the International Baccalaureate in the sixth form, helping to raise achievement and provide a philosophy and approach to learning that underpins the whole school curriculum. They are strongly committed to teaching languages effectively to all students and are successful in finding innovative approaches to learning and teaching. They have developed a harmonious international community through attracting boarding students from overseas.
- There is full commitment to providing many opportunities for learning to the community through the community college.
- Leaders are successful in improving teaching and achievement as a result of a well-planned approach to training and professional development. Staff work supportively together on developing well-considered approaches to learning and teaching that are often underpinned by the philosophy of learning through adventure. The school works well in partnership with other schools and teacher training institutions to improve teaching.
- Teachers' performance is managed well. Performance against their targets, including those for students' progress, is taken into full account in all movement up the pay scales. Weaker performance is well supported and often improved. Most staff are fully committed to the school's aims and ethos and support the leadership. A small minority are less supportive.
- Leaders evaluate the school's performance accurately because checks on teaching are rigorous and students' progress and personal development are closely tracked. Information on students' progress, attendance and behaviour is not always analysed precisely enough to give leaders a full view of how different groups of students are performing throughout the year.
- The curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of most students and parents. Almost all students follow GCSE courses only. A very small number of students follow vocational courses off the school site that meet their needs well. The proportion achieving the English Baccalaureate at GCSE is better than in many schools. The International Baccalaureate is helping to raise aspirations in the sixth form and underpins progression across the whole school. Teaching in a modern foreign language in a range of other subjects is leading to considerable success in achievement in languages for students involved in the pilot project. There are plans to extend this successful project.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to their role. They have been highly influential in the long-term development of the school. They are well informed of students' performance in relation to the national picture. They are fully aware of the performance of staff, and both challenge and support decisions on movement up the pay scale. They set high expectations of the headteacher and provide the right balance of challenge and support. They know how pupil premium funding has been spent and the impact it is having. They handle the budget astutely. They seek appropriate training.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137205
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	411883

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	965
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Watson
Headteacher	Steven Holdup
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	015395 65165
Fax number	015395 65175
Email address	enquiries@dallam.eu

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

